



OUR BODIES OURSELVES TODAY

AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

Politics as Usual October 2024

A Note from Our Program Director

Dear Friends,

The election looming on November 5th has reminded us of a campaign from the Our Bodies Ourselves archive.

“Our Bodies, Our Votes” was the title of [a column that OBOS founder Judy Norsigian wrote](#) for WBUR’s “Cognescenti” in 2012. The piece discussed the unprecedented attacks on women’s access to reproductive care in that moment. Judy pointed to recently enacted laws that restricted abortion and birth control, and to the need to defend the federal Affordable Care Act against its threatened repeal.



A [bumper sticker campaign](#) followed. Then, just a few weeks before the national election, [the Boston Women’s Health Book Collective sent a personal copy of “Our Bodies, Ourselves” to each member of Congress](#), to educate our lawmakers about women’s bodies, health, and sexuality.

Unfortunately, the “Our Bodies, Our Votes” campaign remains as relevant as it was three Presidential elections ago. As Judy wrote then, “For many of us who have been working in women’s health for decades, it is both surreal and discouraging to bear witness to these recent setbacks. What can we do, especially in this critical election year, to reverse these trends and to preserve the gains established in the ACA? We can start by making people, especially young people, aware of the increasing threats to women’s health and family planning.”

This month’s newsletter spotlights the political dimensions of our work. We set forth where we stand on key feminist issues. MB reflects on the importance of social movements and how young people can influence policy. We interview our Mental Health expert panel chair, activist Dior Vargas. We report on the joyous celebration of our newly redesigned website, and on other exciting upcoming events.

Please keep using Our Bodies Ourselves Today to inform yourselves, your communities, and your elected officials. And please vote!

Onward!

Laura

Our Resources

Where We Stand

Many complex and intertwined factors – from genetics to self-care to access to medical care to laws restricting body autonomy – affect people’s health, sexuality, and well-being. We root our perspectives and values in feminism, intersectionality, and reproductive and social justice.



Where We Stand is a new feature on our website, voicing our values on vital issues and topics including sex work and sex trafficking, fat politics, reproductive justice, gendered language, and ageism. We hope our positions inspire you to think about where *you* stand and how you are working for your own values.

Image: "En route to Women's March Rally on 7th Street between Constitution Avenue and Madison Drive, NW, Washington DC on Saturday morning, 21 January 2017" by Elvert Barnes/Wikimedia [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

[Check out Where We Stand](#)

[Support Our Work--Donate Now!](#)

Who We Are: Q&A



Dior Vargas, Our Bodies Ourselves Today Content Expert

In honor of October’s Mental Illness Awareness Week, we spoke to activist **Dior Vargas** (she/her), an Our Bodies Ourselves Today content expert who chairs the panel on Mental Health. Dior created the People of Color and Mental Illness Photo Project, a response to the invisibility of BIPOC in the media representation of mental illness.

**What brought you to Our Bodies Ourselves Today?
What do you value most about this work?**

I first learned about Our Bodies Ourselves when I was a Study of Women and Gender major at Smith College. When I got the opportunity to be part of the work over 15 years later, I was so excited to participate. This is a full-circle moment. I'm a mental health activist and I use my personal experiences to help and empower others. Similarly as a content expert for OBOS Today, we use our professional and lived experiences to ensure that the resources we collect and review contain pertinent, accurate, and meaningful content that will benefit those who access them.

What's a crucial issue related to health and sexuality that you hope our website makes more understandable?

We need to understand that mental health is part of all of our lives and impacts everything we do. It is important to prioritize. We also need to understand that living with mental health struggles or a mental health condition does not equate to violence. Those with mental health conditions are more likely to become victims of violence. We need to come from a preventative standpoint rather than a reactionary one when it comes to this issue.

What gives you hope?

The work of OBOS Today gives me hope. It is so important in this current landscape. We need reliable sources, specifically with an intersectional feminist lens. We need future generations to be empowered and well-informed. People working towards community mental health also give me hope. We all need to talk about mental health more and find ways to support this work and one another.

[□ More about Dior Vargas](#)



**Stories & Conversations:
The Influence of Youth
Activism**

In this clip from our “Stories & Conversations,” former OBOS Today intern Isabella Khan talked with MB about

public policy, social media, and activism.

MB says, “One thing that I’ve actually been studying is the idea that social movements now, specifically for the youth, look so much different than in the past . . . The youth can really influence elections or policy so I’m really excited to see where that goes.”

[□ Listen to MB's story](#)



Celebrating Our New Website!

It's official! **We have a new website!**

On September 26, we joyfully celebrated the public launch of our redesigned website! The hybrid New Website Reveal Party gathered guests from the many parts of the Our Bodies Ourselves Today network, from founders to students. About 50 people joined us in person on a stormy Boston evening, while dozens more zoomed in from as far away as Ireland to help mark the occasion. Speakers included:

- Amy Agigian, Jonese Austin, Grace Koch, and Laura Prieto from the Our Bodies Ourselves Today team at Suffolk
- Edie Sparks, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Suffolk University
- Lizzy Ajayi, Suffolk summer intern
- Rebecca Kling, of the OBOS Today Leadership Council
- Dior Vargas, content expert chair
- Karen Mazer, volunteer and donor
- Diana Namumbemba Abwoye, president of the OBOS Board of Directors
- OBOS founders Joan Ditzion, Norma Meras Swenson, and Kiki Zeldes

With special thanks to Suffolk students Annamarana Roberts–

Briggs, Brynn Buckley, and Aaradhana Joshi who worked behind the scenes, and at the welcome table, to ensure the festivities went smoothly.

Our new look, expanded content, and improved accessibility – with kudos to designer Eva Parker Passalacqua – awaits your exploration at <http://ourbodiesourselves.org>.

[□ Watch the celebration](#)

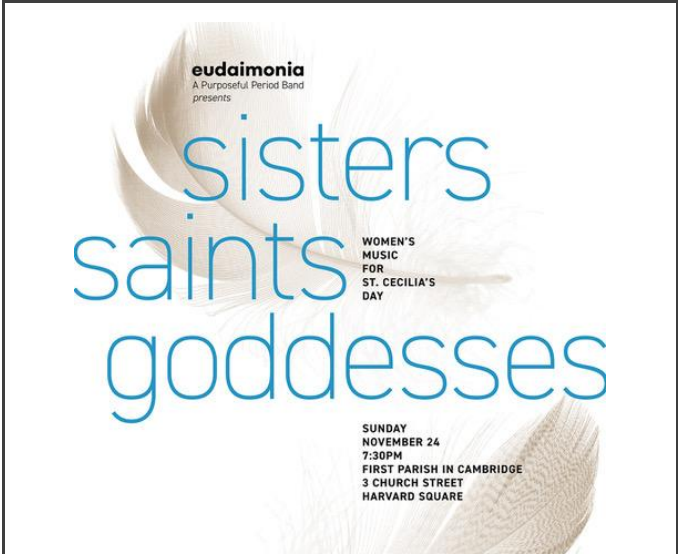
□ Upcoming Events □

Saturday, October 19,
2pm EST
Book talk with
Christa Kuljian
“Our Science, Ourselves:
How Gender, Race and
Social Movements Shaped
the Study of Science”
(Cambridge Public
Library)

[Register to attend](#)

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Tuesday, Dec 10  
6pm EST  
"Aging & Sexuality"  
Heather Corinna  
in conversation with  
Judy Norsigian  
(Suffolk University,  
Boston, MA)  
More details TBA



**eudaimonia**  
A Purposeful Period Band  
presents

sisters  
saints  
goddesses

WOMEN'S  
MUSIC  
FOR  
ST. CECILIA'S  
DAY

SUNDAY  
NOVEMBER 24  
7:30PM  
FIRST PARISH IN CAMBRIDGE  
3 CHURCH STREET  
HARVARD SQUARE

Sunday, Nov 24  
7:30pm EST  
Saints, Sisters, Goddesses:  
Women's Music for  
St Cecilia's Day  
Eudaimonia concert  
(Cambridge MA)

This concert highlights the work of  
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center  
(BARCC) and **Our Bodies Ourselves  
Today** in protecting and supporting  
women's bodies and rights

[□ More info](#)

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**Please share this newsletter with a friend!**

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## □ What We're Reading □

In September, we asked you to tell us what you were reading, and you responded!

Other readers enjoyed and recommended “Pomegranate” by Helen Elaine Lee (“about a formerly incarcerated woman, her love for another woman in prison, and her life after--something I knew little about”); Charlotte Taft's historical novel "Without Permission," which explores issues of abortion and sexuality; and “Pageboy: A Memoir,” by Elliot Page (about the author’s lived experience of gender transition, revealing his inner struggle and the outward judgment he experienced).

What else have you enjoyed reading lately? What's on your TBR pile? We'd love to hear from you.

[click here to recommend a book to us](#)

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*Your accurate **and** inclusive  
guide to health, sexuality, **and**  
reproductive justice*



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